

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHANNEL STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

## **I. MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the St. Charles Parish Government Access Channel is to make local government more accessible and understandable to the citizens of St. Charles Parish.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The St. Charles Parish Government Access Channel exists primarily to inform the public of government meetings, actions, policies, services and events. The channel also informs residents on public affairs to facilitate the exchange of public information. It is also a direct line of communication between the Emergency Operations Center and the public during emergencies.

Operators of the Channel will emphasize professional quality in the delivery of programming and use community resources in the Channel's operation in order to support the community and minimize costs.

## **III. MEETINGS**

The following meetings, which are held in the Parish Council Chambers, will be shown "Live":

- Parish Council (All meetings – regular and special)
- Parish Council Committees
- Hospital Board
- Library Board
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Zoning Board of Adjustments
- Housing Authority
- Communications District (911)
- Qualification Based Selection Review Panel (QBS)
- Sunset Drainage District
- Coastal Zone Advisory Board
- Industrial Development Board
- Community Action Advisory Board
- Civil Service Board (Excluding disciplinary hearings)

Parish Council meetings will be replayed at 7 p.m. on Tuesdays, 10 a.m. on Thursdays, 7 p.m. on Fridays and 2 p.m. on Sundays.

Camera operators will supply a DVD of these meetings to the EOC immediately after the Council meeting. EOC staffers will continue to tape each Council meeting on Digital Video tape as a backup measure.

The Council Records office will make additional DVD copies of Council meetings from the original DVD and send one to the St. Charles Parish Library for the Louisiana Room to be placed in the Parish Archives.

Planning and Zoning Commission meetings will be replayed Sundays at 7 p.m.

All other meetings airing “Live” shall be recorded by EOC staffers on Digital Video tape and transferred to the Council Records office for conversion to DVD. The tape may then be returned to EOC for future tapings.

All recordings of the Parish meetings or other related business are the property of the Parish and as such are not to be removed from the EOC except when transferring them to the Council Records Office for safekeeping or Public Information Officer for digital duplication.

All public meetings will be covered gavel-to-gavel. The meetings will be replayed in their entirety. Any editing will only occur for the addition of title pages, captions or coverage lost due to technical considerations.

If a meeting is televised live and goes into “closed session,” the Government Access Channel operator may display a message describing the current status of the meeting or play other segments during the break.

All meeting notices for the above boards shall be posted on the Channel and the parish Web site as soon as finalized by contacting the St. Charles Parish Public Information Office. Notices on the Channel will not suffice for compliance with public meeting law notices.

Anyone requesting a copy of a DVD may do so by contacting the Council Secretary’s Office.

#### **IV. PROGRAMMING IN GENERAL**

Government departments and agencies are given priority use of the St. Charles Parish Government Access Channel. Other nonprofit agencies and civic groups are allowed to use the Channel on a non-priority basis. To be considered for video coverage or inclusion, a department or agency must contact the Public Information Officer.

The Public Information Officer shall have the discretion to produce and air news magazine programs, program series, special events, calendars, documentaries and public service announcements.

Public service announcements and videos of community events or in the community interest produced outside the Public Information Office may be shown with prior approval of the Public Information Officer.

All final decisions about programming are hereby left to the discretion of the Public Information Officer and/or Parish President.

## **V. SPECIAL EVENT COVERAGE**

The Public Information Office must receive at least two week's advance notice of an upcoming community event if it is to be included in calendar listings or slides. This rule only applies to events sponsored by non-governmental entities.

Requests should be received in writing through forms available at [www.stcharlesgov.net](http://www.stcharlesgov.net) or via e-mail or fax. Exceptions apply to messages of an emergency nature that affect residents' health and safety, which will be placed on the Channel as soon as possible.

Producers may edit submitted materials to conform to space and technical limitations.

The Public Information Officer reserves the right to make decisions about special event coverage on a case-by-case basis.

## **VI. PROGRAMMING RULES IN GENERAL**

The Channel shall not be used to produce or show video programming for private or commercial organizations.

Parish departments and agencies requesting coverage on the Channel must be willing to assist in producing the program if asked to do so. This may include furnishing necessary information, gathering together persons and props to be used in the program and making on-air presentations as deemed necessary by the Public Information Office or videographer.

Programming shall not include slanderous, lewd, obscene, indecent or violent material or language. When questions arise as to the admissibility of material or language in this regard, the material will be reviewed subject to state and/or local law, and the FCC definition of "indecent" as "programming that describes or depicts sexual or excretory activities or organs in a patently offensive manner as measured by contemporary community standards for a cable medium."

The programming shall not coerce anyone to support or participate in religion or its exercise, or otherwise act in a way which "establishes a (state) religion or religious faith, or tends to do so."

The programming shall not include paid advertising. The Government Access Channel is a non-commercial channel. Advertising is prohibited. The programming shall not include direct appeals to purchase commercial goods or services.

Programming shall be direct, non-editorial information regarding the operation and deliberations of local government and other public affairs. The Channel shall not serve as a mechanism for building support for a particular policy, program or issue.

The programming shall not include declared candidates for elected office. Candidates for elected office may not use the Channel as a part of a campaign effort. This exclusion does not apply to persons who receive airtime as part of official public meeting coverage, election coverage and coverage of incumbents performing official duties.

Opinions expressed on the Channel may not necessarily reflect those of the St. Charles Parish Council, the Parish President or parish staff.

St. Charles Parish shall hold the copyright on all programs produced for airing on the Channel.

All videotapes and/or DVDs produced by and used for production of television programs by the staff of the St. Charles Parish Public Information Office shall remain the property of the office and St. Charles Parish government.

## **VII. ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

The Public Information Office realizes that the St. Charles Parish Government Access Channel is limited only to those households with cable subscriptions. Therefore, the Public Information Office (and EOC, when necessary) shall endeavor to duplicate government information seen on the Channel on the parish Web site and/or printed newsletters and brochures.

**This procedure was signed and approved by Parish President V.J. St. Pierre on May 22, 2008.**